

# The Story Club

by Edmund Vance Cooke

## "MUST"—Part II.

For a moment Paul thought the Floor had ended the argument, as there was a pause, but then came a slower, heavier voice.

"Just as we must bear you," said the Joists, "for every board of you is nailed to us."

"And WE must hold YOU," said the Uprights in the walls, "for you are hanging onto us, remember."

"Even as you are resting on me," said the cold, dull voice of the Foundation Stones. "I must hold up the house all by myself."

"Oh, must you?" said a deep, dull voice which came from old Earth itself. "And where would you be if I did not have to hold you in my bosom, as I whirl through space?"

Then came another voice which seemed to shine instead of sound. "I must hold you, O Earth, and a dozen like you, must hold you without touching you, must hold you millions of miles away, else I would burn you up, yet near enough so that you will not freeze, I am the Sun."

One more Voice there was and yet it could hardly be called a voice. It could not be heard, or seen. It could only be felt. "Complain no more," it said, "there is no longer any Must in the Universe. Do each of you as you please, only complain no more."

At the word, the mattress turn-

ed itself over and slipped from under the Boy. The spring sprang out of the bedstead and all of its curlycues straightened out and sang. The bedstead threw itself into a lazy heap upon the rug, which rolled itself up along the floor, only the floor caved in, and the joists sank and the uprights tumbled down and the foundation stones stood up and fell over each other.

And the earth caved into its fiery center.

And the sun went out.

And nothing supported anything.

And the Boy felt himself falling through space with no place to fall to! And there was nothing to complain about, because everyone and everything could do as it pleased. "Must" was abolished from the world.

Paul crawled back into bed and the next morning when he opened his mouth to complain over something he must do, he shut it again, without speaking, for he thought of what the world would be if nothing had to do anything.

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"When you just have to do something," said Marteeny, wisely, "I find that it's quite easy if you just make it into play." "I guess you learned that as far back as the Kindergarten," said the Storyman, "but never mind. Tell us how you do it. 'Oh, it's